

LESSONS FROM A U.S. ARMY JTF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN TASK FORCE (SETAF)

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JOINT TASK FORCE MISSION: To Facilitate Humanitarian Assistance in a Joint/Combined Operational Environment.

PURPOSE: The following observations were gained from correspondence between a JTF commander, his staff and the theater CINC for a recent humanitarian assistance contingency operation within a Joint/Combined environment. The following observations are unclassified. This article captures universal JTF lessons to support and prepare other organizations for similar operations. This is not an after-action report.

WHAT IS A JTF?: Forward deployed, rapid response and mission-capable organizations with a two-star-level organization and supporting staff need to be prepared to assume the role of a JTF in a combined operational environment. Recent history and current experiences have revalidated this fact time and again. Clearly, this mission cannot be accomplished with the organic divisional organized staff. All JTFs require augmentation. The designated JTF Headquarters must identify required staff augmentation by operational phase and purpose, through **continual** mission analysis. For a conventional two-star-level staff, this is normally an uncomfortable adjustment. Traditionally, a division staff's focus has "looked down," and relied upon another U.S. headquarters (corps) to "look up" to resource, synchronize and provide guidance, direction and approval. Frequently, a JTF staff will find itself reporting directly to the CINC, while performing other corps and theater responsibilities in the absence of a corps or Army-level command and control architecture.

MISSION ANALYSIS: This step of the Military Decision-Making Process does not end with the initial CINC's Warning Order (WARNORD) or Planning Order (PLANORD). Mission Analysis and the Joint Force Commander's "Change of Mission" recommendations must be revisited on a very frequent basis. In this way, the JFC can shape the JTF capabilities within its battlespace, and facilitate its operational effectiveness. The JTF commander must determine and continually re-evaluate the established preconditions for the success of each operational phase to progress to another phase, a branch or a sequel.

Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA): These agreements do not exist with most countries where a JTF may be sent for humanitarian assistance operations. It is unrealistic to expect that they can be negotiated on short notice for almost any contingency operation. This organization was not successful in trying to establish them. Moreover, despite continuous and focused attempts on the issue, workarounds were not successful. The JTF was forced to operate within the changing confines of the established (and continually changing) political and judicial environments of the countries where the JTF had to operate.

TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

COMMAND, CONTROL AND COMMUNICATION (C³):

What is the role of a U.S. JTF within a Multi-National Force (MNF)?: Every contingency operation is different. Coalitions and alliances are also very different. International agreements take a long time to develop and many do not exist with countries where a JTF may be sent for a comparatively short period of time. A JTF headquarters may be required to directly coordinate, facilitate and execute operations for another command and control headquarters, for all or part of a contingency operation. Frequent coordination with the U.S. Embassy and other international government's political representatives will also be required.

Understanding Information Operations: Everyone wants to help, but everyone comes to a theater with different resources. Each member of the international community also comes to a theater with different geo-political and military aims. As the military and civilian players arrive in theater, they begin competing for the same critical U.S. Military resources. In the early stages of a crisis, the national and international lines of command and control will be in an evolutionary stage. This requires a

JTF to temporarily step outside of the established military lines of communication. The JTF must plan and execute an aggressive information campaign in support of the CINC's objectives.

- **The JTF Command and Control:** Historically, when the U.S. Military is committed to a contingency, they either assumed or have been assigned the operational military lead. In future contingency operations, this may not automatically be the case. The roles, missions and functions of a JTF will change as the situation in the Combined/Joint Area of Operations evolves. A U.S. JTF may initially take the operational lead. Subsequently, the JTF may find itself subordinate, or working in parallel with other allied, multinational or coalition organizations. An international organization, such as the United Nations, may serve as the headquarters for some international military forces, while the U.S. JTF executes operations in another AO independently or in parallel.

As the situation develops, other nations may commit additional forces, resources and capabilities to the Joint/Combined Theater of Operations. Given the rapidly developing nature of these contingency operations, synchronization between international forces may initially be lacking. Absent a designated or sanctioned higher headquarters, successful operational synchronization will only be achieved through multiple communication channels.

- **The Joint Force Commander's Military Lines of Communication:** Frequent and direct communication and coordination with the establishing and/or the operational higher headquarters of the JTF are mission essential. This must go beyond traditional operational and intelligence summaries. The JTF Commander must tie these situation reports to his personal operational assessment and a recommended "way ahead." In this way, the JTF commander helps the CINC to achieve the desired operational end state within established or directed timelines.

This is also critical for the JTF commander. He can then influence his operational and tactical requirements in personnel, military equipment, unique civilian assets, time and space to accomplish the assigned JTF mission. Staff officers must recognize that this communication may become filtered and modified as the communication works through the multiple echelons and channels of both military and political command and control. Requests for information must be vigorously pursued.

- **The Joint Force Commander's International Military Lines of Communication:** Planning guidance and directives from the international and Department of State (DOS) levels may not support the actual tempo of operations within the Joint/Combined Operational Area. Mutual trust between nations must be maintained between international military counterparts and their components within the Joint/Combined Theater of Operations. This is imperative to foster effective horizontal lines of communication and facilitate information sharing. An example of the importance of this concept is the common, or uncommon understanding of the operational end state between all international political and military organizations.
- **The Joint Force Commander's Political Lines of Communication:** Multiple, vertical lines of communication will necessarily come into existence between participating international military organizations and their respective political representatives and decisionmakers. Some lines of communication may be merely informational. Others will be used for decisionmaking and approval. Every international and military organization has its own perspective on the current operational situation and how it is tied to their country's strategic aim.

JTF Reconnaissance and Ground Truth: Once established, or as soon as authorized, the JFC **MUST** place a task-organized assessment organization/team into the Joint/Combined Area of Operation. This is invaluable to both the JTF Commander and the CINC.

- **Liaison:** The importance of complete, competent, and trained liaison cannot be over emphasized. Liaison must not only include internal JTF components. Equally, and perhaps even more important, is liaison with multinational political, military and police organizations both inside and around the areas that are supporting the Joint/Combined Operational Forces.
- **Eyes on the Objective:** First-hand human reconnaissance is the best way for the JTF Commander to provide timely and accurate assessments for the CINC as the

situation develops. This is essential to support the CINC's decisionmaking process and provide timely input for his staff to answer his critical information requirements.

- **The Joint Force Commander's Critical Information Requirements:** Satisfaction of these information requirements provides the JTF Commander with a continuous assessment of what is required to accomplish both the tactical and the operational end state. This must be done by phase, if not by week or even daily. In this way, the JTF Commander can have near real-time input to the Time-Phased Force Deployment Flow of U.S. forces into and out of the Joint/Combined Area of Operations. Additionally, force protection requirements and necessary adjustments are also assessed on a recurring basis.
- **Economy of Force:** Liaison and coordination with multinational forces on the ground may also prevent redundancy or identify holes in planned or current tactical or operational capabilities. Participating international military capabilities can change on almost a daily, even an hourly basis. A constant JTF assessment system or process must be established and rehearsed.
- **Reduced Footprint:** Host and/or supporting nation capabilities can be accurately assessed and possibly coordinated/contracted for--first hand. This may assist, or even be mission essential in reducing the JTF's footprint throughout the Joint/Combined Operational Area. Contracting officers are mission essential to the JTF assessment team.
- **One Team:** Coordination and liaison with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs) and Other Governmental Agencies (OGAs) within the Joint/Combined Operational Area can only be effectively accomplished in person--on the ground. In most cases, these organizations have been in the theater much longer than the Joint/Combined Military Force that came together as the result of a relatively recent crisis. Depending on the organization and often the personalities involved, NGOs, PVOs and OGAs can be a tremendous source of current human intelligence, assistance, coordination and even liaison.
- **Communication:** The importance of French or Spanish as an alternative to English as the primary language for coordination and liaison should not be underestimated. For many countries, these may be their international language. This has an even more significant impact for the JTF commander if it is spoken by key leaders and liaison officers, instead of through an interpreter.

EDUCATION AND PREPARATION OF THE JTF: Due to the size of the typical divisional "core" JTF staff, the normally temporary assignment of components and specialty staff augmentation, some additional education for U.S. Army JTFs may be required. Considerations for preparation and education include, but are not limited to:

- JTF Reconnaissance/Assessment Checklists, i.e., Humanitarian Assistance and NEO.
- U.S. Military Component Capabilities and Proposed Theater Multinational Components Capabilities.
- U.N. Charters, Chapters, and existing Operations within the theater/C/JOA.
- UNHCR Capabilities and Limitations, Constraints and Restrictions.
- Applicable Country Studies, i.e., APODs, SPODs, LOCs, or Classes of Supply, Host-Nation Support.
- Applicable Threat/Opponent Studies.
- Current International Operations, Alliances, Support and Limitations or Restrictions within the proposed J/COA.

- Capabilities, Support and Coordination with SOF, DOS, USEMB and U.S. Country Teams.
- International Coordination and Communication, i.e., Coalition vs Alliance.
- Background, Mission and Capabilities of applicable NGOs, PVOs, and OGAs.
- Country Study Information Briefs and Frequent Updates from Other Nations, Military Forces (Peacekeepers), etc.

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